

Seven Steps to Organic Certification

Contact the WSDA Organic Food Program.

We will send you an application packet and Organic Certification Guide.

Read the WSDA Certification Guide.

The guide will provide answers to commonly asked questions about organic certification.

Complete and submit the application forms with the appropriate fee.

Application review and approval.

We will review your application to ensure it complies with National Organic Standards.

Organic Food Inspection

An organic inspection of your business will occur.

Inspection report review.

We will review your inspection report to ensure that your business complies with National Organic Standards.

Certification status notification.

You will be notified of the organic status of your business.



Growth in Washington's Organic Sector

Number of Organic Farms:

1988—63 farms
1997—290 farms
2002—560 farms
2005—571 farms

Certified Organic Acreage:

1988—2,000 acres
1997—12,000 acres
2002—46,000 acres
2005—60,759 acres

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Organic Food Program



Organic
Crop Production



What is organic crop production?

Organic crop production is a farming system that is managed in accordance with National Organic Standards in response to site-specific conditions. An organic farm integrates cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster the cycling of resources, promote ecological balance and conserve biodiversity. Organic crop production standards require:

- The use of organic seeds, seedlings, and annual transplants.
- Practices that enhance or maintain soil fertility.
- A crop rotation or the use of cover crops.
- Practices that enhance or maintain a farm's natural resources.
- Practices that prevent pest and disease pressure.
- Harvest and packing practices that prevent commingling with or contamination by prohibited materials.
- The use of approved materials for organic production.
- Verification that no prohibited materials or practices were applied to a site for at least 36-months prior to certification.
- A recordkeeping system that clearly describes all practices being implemented on the farm.



Common Questions

Can I grow both organic and conventional crops?

Yes. You must maintain adequate buffer zones to prevent spray drift of a prohibited material onto your organic crops. Records must be maintained that clearly differentiate organic and conventional production.

Do I have to use organic seeds?

Yes. National Organic Standards require that organic seeds, annual transplants and seedlings be used unless they are not commercially available. Commercial availability is defined by appropriate form, quality or quantity.

If I grow perennials, do I need to grow a cover crop?

Yes. National Organic Standards require that crop rotations and/or cover crops are integrated into an organic cropping system. Organic cover crop seeds must be used unless they are not commercially available.

How do I know if I am also an organic handler/processor?

Organic handler/processor certification is required if:

- You sell organic products produced by another certified grower.
- You change an organic food into another form or product (can, freeze, dry, dehydrate, cook, press, etc.)

What should I expect at my organic food inspection?

An inspector will contact you to set a date, time and location for your organic inspection. Inspections are conducted before the harvest of the organic crop. You will be asked to have the following documentation available for review at the time of your inspection:

- Material application records.
- Material receipts and invoices.
- Composting records.
- Accurate site maps.
- Documentation verifying your attempts to source organic seeds.
- Yield records.
- Sales records.

Be prepared for this process to take time. Organic food inspections can take from one hour to several days, depending on the size of the farm. In addition to reviewing the records identified above, an extensive interview regarding your farming practices will be conducted and the inspector will want to physically examine the following: production sites, material storage area, farm equipment, and any other applicable areas to your production.

